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Montana Pupil Transportation News and Updates March/April 2006



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Since You Asked

How much time does a new driver have to get a First Aid card?

Administrative Rule 10.7.111 Qualifications of Bus Drivers, Section (3) says, "In the event a district (or contractor) is obligated to employ a driver as a replacement for a driver employed at the beginning of the school year, or must employ an additional driver, a period of 60 days will be permitted for the new driver to acquire the First Aid certificate. If after the 60 days following the date of first employment of the additional or replacement driver, the First Aid requirement has not been met, the bus operated by the driver will not qualify for state reimbursement for that portion of the year that the driver is not qualified, including the 60-day grace period."

How do we know that a driver is qualified to drive?

Administrative Rule 10.7.111 Qualifications of Bus Drivers, Section (4) says, "The holding of a Montana school bus driver certificate is proof that the driver meets all the qualifications of the school transportation law. The bus driver certificate forms are provided by the superintendent of public instruction for use by the board of trustees. The board issues a certificate to each driver who is authorized and qualified to drive, and files a copy with the county superintendent and a copy with the superintendent of public instruction."

What happens when a driver is diagnosed with diabetes and requires insulin for control?

Kris Phillips, Division Administrator
(FMCSA) sends the following:



"The Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration web site <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov> contains Frequently Asked Q & A's for the medical program. From the main page, under **Most Requested**, click on **Medical Program**. When the new page comes up you'll see the heading **QUESTIONS**.

We have requested that FMCSA headquarters add information regarding qualification of drivers who have

diabetes and who are using the new drug Byetta since we are getting inquiries regarding this. On June 29, 2005 FMCSA headquarters responded to our Nebraska office that Byetta (a new injectable drug) is not insulin, and is permitted, but added they will be looking at it more. In August 2005 headquarters added: We recommend drivers taking Byetta provide a written statement to the Medical Examiner from their treating physician and that they be monitored frequently.

PS: If you receive inquiries for Vision or Insulin Waivers (Exemptions) please refer them to the program office handling this at: (703) 448-3094 or direct them to the agency website for the application package. It can be accessed the same as above but instead look at the heading **FORMS** and select: **Driver Exemption Programs (Diabetes, Vision).**"

Please direct any comments or questions regarding these medical issues to fmcsamedical@fmcsa.dot.gov. Kris can be reached at kris.phillips@fmcsa.dot.gov or by phone (406) 449-5304 ext. 107.

Why does the OPI still require social security numbers (SSN) on TR-35 Driver Certification?

The SSN is still required for purposes of background checks, etc. The good news is that the new on-line transportation program will be available for school district staff and contractors by mid to late August. Once the program is available, the SSN will be invisible to all but a designated few. The clerk or contractor will key the SSN into the system and no one will be able to access the number except the designated person at OPI.

The TR-35 module is in test right now and preliminary testing looks great. Information for completing the document will be entered on-line and submitted to OPI. The program will be password protected.

EPA Delegates 2006 Clean School Bus Funding to Regions

EPA has announced that the \$7 million appropriated by Congress for the Clean School Bus USA program in 2005 will be distributed through EPA's regional network rather

than through a national competition. The eligible recipients will include school transportation associations.

Each of the various EPA Regional offices will issue their own Requests for Applications, and links to them will be posted on EPA's website at www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus as they become available.



Although contractors are not eligible to apply on their own, there are several ways that NSTA members can access this funding either to retrofit current buses or to help replace buses older than 1990. One way is to partner with the school districts you serve to apply for a grant; another is to work with a local or state-wide nonprofit organization, such as the Lung Association; still another is to go through your city or county education department or a local air quality agency. Most importantly, your state school bus association can apply for a grant that they can use to fund sub grants to members and their customers.

The Montana School Bus Contractors Association (MSBCA) sends the following for maintenance personnel:

Maintenance Workshops

"We are pleased to announce the continuation of the Maintenance Workshops at manufacturers' plants! This is an excellent opportunity for your maintenance technicians and other staff to become experts on how a school bus operates and learn how to troubleshoot mechanical issues with ease. Workshops will be held at the following locations on the dates listed:

Blue Bird Corporation - Fort Valley, GA

- **July 18-19, 2006**
- **September 19-20, 2006**

International Truck & Engine Corporation - Tulsa, OK

- **September 25-28, 2006**

Thomas Built Buses - High Point, NC

- **October 24-25, 2006**

Information and registration forms are available online on the home page of the NSTA website, www.yellowbuses.org."

National School Bus Safety Week

Information regarding the rules for the National School Bus Safety Week poster contest is included in the May mailing to districts, contractors, head start operators, and county superintendents.

The poster contest rules are very detailed and must be followed to ensure that state winners qualify for the national awards. Awards for these posters are substantial, ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 savings bonds. The Montana

Association of Pupil Transportation donates \$125 each year for distribution to state winners.

National School Bus Safety Week is October 15-21, 2006. The posters can be drawn anytime between now and the state deadline of September 15, 2006.

The Montana winners by age category for 2005 are:

Age 12-13

Victoria Hampton – age 12
Mrs. DosSantos's class
Trout Creek School

Jessy Linderman – age 13
Mrs. DosSantos's class
Trout Creek School

Age 10-11

Jeremia Crawford – age 10
Mrs. Willoughby's class
Paradise Elementary

Dominique M. Black – age 11
Mrs. Willoughby's Class
Paradise School

Dayna Bran – age 11
Mr. Miller's class
Trout Creek School

Age 8-9

Katelyn Martins – age 8
Ms. Nikola's class
Trout Creek School

Sophia Pierini – age 9
Mrs. Starkey's class
Plains Elementary

Mikalla Gardener – age 9
Ms. Nikola's class
Trout Creek School

Age 5

Holly Carlsmith – age 5
Ms. Keane's class
Trout Creek School



The winning posters have been displayed at the Office of Public Instruction and will be on display at the MAPT June Conference in Kalispell. Congratulations to each student and to each teacher. Checks from the MAPT along with congratulatory letters from Linda McCulloch,

State Superintendent were mailed to the winners at the close of the contest.

The winning posters were chosen by school bus drivers attending driver training in October of 2005 at Fromberg, Montana. For more information, please contact Maxine at mmougeot@mt.gov.

Fuel Prices Are out of Sight – Here's one idea

Although fuel prices have reached near-record highs, some schools have enjoyed savings and efficiency in recent months by using fleet cards available through the Montana Public Vehicle Fueling Program. Schools are able to purchase diesel fuel net of the 24.3 cent Federal Excise Tax for contractor-owned buses, and then apply for the State Excise Tax reimbursement of \$0.2775 per gallon. To qualify for the tax exemption, the district—not the contractor—must purchase and pay for the fuel. District-owned buses with exempt license plates have an immediate tax-free option by using low-sulfur red dyed diesel at the many locations where it is available.



The current program is about to get even better as the state recently awarded a new contract to Comdata®/Trans Montaigne for fuel card management services.



The “no-fee” Comdata MasterCard® is a true one-card solution, especially for activity buses. The card has the convenience of acceptance at 1,000 retail fuel locations in Montana and anywhere MasterCard is accepted, including

Canada. If service is needed away from the barn, school districts may use the card at over 1,500 maintenance and automotive-related merchants in Montana and anywhere MasterCard is accepted, for fleet related purchases such as car washes, oil changes, tires, auto parts and service. Fuel discounts are more readily available as merchants pay considerably less to accept the MasterCard instead of the current proprietary card.

Costs are managed by the many card controls available, including restricting where the card may be used, dollars per transaction, number of transactions per day, after-hours and weekend restrictions and even limiting drivers to pay-at-the-pump (where available) instead of going into a station. Real-time reporting provides up-to-the-minute detail on school fuel and maintenance purchases as the transactions occur instead of waiting for the billing statement.



Comdata is in the process of moving existing accounts to the new MasterCard platform and will be contacting you in the near future to discuss account sign-up options and controls, and will be in attendance at the upcoming Pupil Transportation conference in Kalispell on June 21-23, 2006.



Helena Public Schools has recently signed up for these services. Helena's transportation services are provided by Laidlaw. Each bus will be equipped with a Comdata purchasing card and the

driver can just go to the pump, swipe the card and fill the bus. Currently with the old card, the drivers are standing in line at only certain fuel stations.

As stated, the federal excise tax comes off at the pump and Helena applies for a rebate of the state tax. An additional percentage comes off at the pump for the bulk discount. Helena estimates that the savings might be as much as 3% to the transportation program. That is a savings of about \$5,000 per month over the price Laidlaw was paying.

We will monitor Helena's program to see what the final numbers are. We know for certain that as more school districts use this service, the greater the discount will be.

Devin Garrity manages the State program in Helena and asks that interested schools please contact Tom Gustin, Comdata Government Account Manager, tgustin@comdata.com, (406) 431-5127 or Kevin Hill, Comdata Implementation Project Manager, khill@comdata.com, at (615) 370-7487.



Quote for the day

Nearly all men can stand adversity but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.
Abraham Lincoln (1809 - 1865)

PROMPTLY RETURN TRAINING VIDEOS

To access the school bus driver training video list and annual bus driver training requirements plus see a listing of available training go to www.opi.mt.gov/pupiltransport. The list is available under "OPI Video Training Library" and "School Bus Driver Training." Contact Raelen Williard at rwilliard@mt.gov or call her at (406) 444-2082.

IMPORTANT DATES

May 10, 2006 Second Semester TR-5's and TR-6's due from school districts to county superintendent

May 24, 2006 Second Semester TR-5's and TR-6's due from county superintendents to the OPI

May 15, 2006 1st Semester **2007** TR-13's posted to transportation web site – email clerks & co. superintendents

June 20, 2006 1st Annual MAPT Golf Tournament in Kalispell, Contact Buzz Berry at 752-7681

June 21, 22, 23, 2006 MAPT Conference in Kalispell, Montana, Contact Betty Kunkel at 454-6776

June 23, 2006 2nd Semester Transportation reimbursement payment sent to schools

July 1-31, 2006 Maxine will be on vacation. Contact Paul Taylor at 444-3024 or Denise Ulberg at 444-1960

To ensure the second semester transportation reimbursement payment is accurate, please update driver certificates, bus inspection forms, route information and individual transportation contracts regularly. Absolutely NO 2006 second semester adjustments will be made until September 25, 2006.